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Photo, Saunders, Buffalo, 1905

James N. Johnston.

DONEGAL MEMORIES

BY

JAMES NICOLL JOHNSTON

"Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining."

PRIVATELY PRINTED
THE MATTHEWS-NORTHRUP WORKS
BUFFALO, NEW YORK
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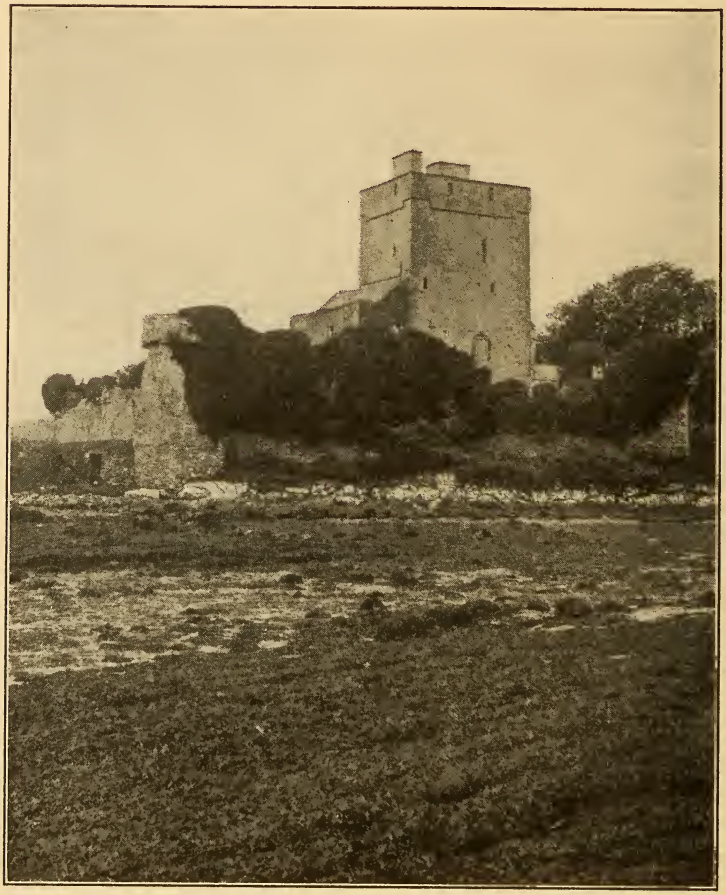


DOE CASTLE, ARDS ESTATE, SHEEP HAVEN BAY

LONGINGS

I am weary of the summer heat,
Of looking out on the city street —
Of the sad, worn looks of the people I meet,
  And I long for the ocean's roar;
For the salt sea air and to wander away
O'er the heathery heights of Sheep Haven Bay,
  And the fields of Cashelmore.

I long to stand where the sea-birds call,
By Horn Head's steep and rocky wall,
And watch the great waves break and fall;
  For there's life on the hills and life by the sea,
  And voices forever are calling to me
From the wilds of Donegal!

NORTH SIDE LOUGH SWILLY, LAGAN BEYOND

MEMORIES

Land of rare beauties, old land of Tyrconnel,
Through all the years gone fond memories stay;
Where once ruled the brave Sweeney, the valiant O'Donnell—
Dear land of my childhood, I see you to-day.

Salt waters still lave the shores of Lough Swilly;
Tides ebb and flow in great Sheep Haven Bay,
Green vales, and dark uplands, heathclad and hilly,
You stand now before me, I see you to-day.

On the strand of Tramore I've watched the waves speeding;
O'er the bent-sprinkled sand hills did joyously stray;
Above their deep burrows the rabbits were feeding;
Is Tolly hill green in the winter to-day?

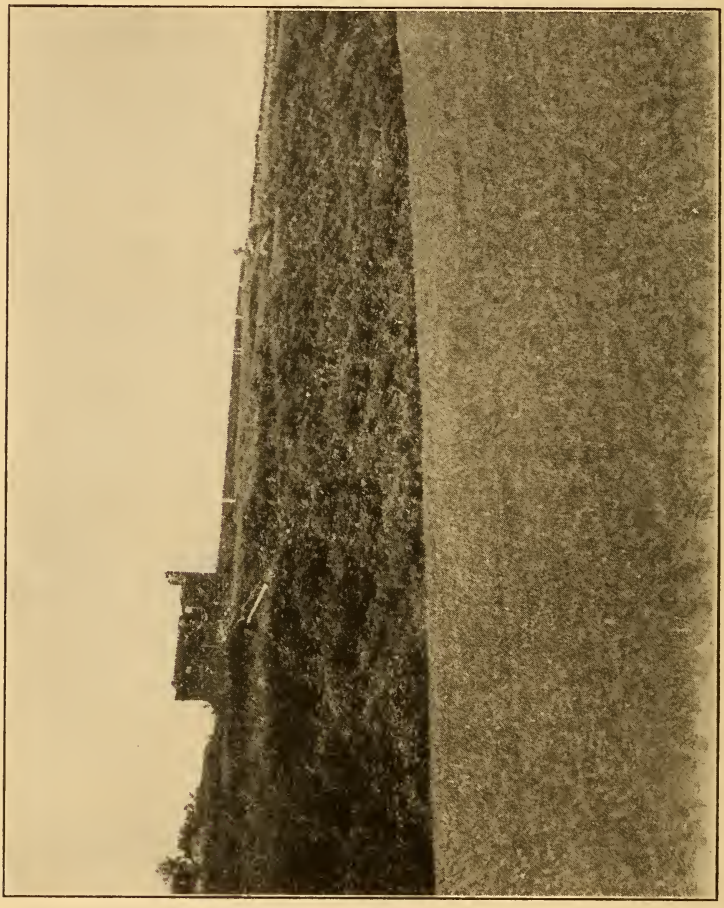
When north winds were fierce and billows were soaring,
O'er Horn Head's sharp crags was a wondrous display—
McSweeney's Gun booming, far heard was its roaring;
Now rare is its thunder, low booms it to-day.

The leas and the daisies, the sweet hawthorn hedges
With violet and primrose to brighten the way;
Some close by the roadside, some up the steep ledges—
In past years they blossomed, I see them to-day.

The mist in the morning up Muckish was creeping;
The mill on the Cloon partly hid by the spray;
Upon the swift mill-wheel white waters were leaping;
I watched them with wonder and see them to-day.

The spry Irish boys and the girls at the dances;
The fairs and the frolics, lives blithesome and gay;
The weddings and convoys, life's changes and chances—
Old joys and old sorrows are with me to-day;

Again by the turf fire I hear the wheels whirring—
The spinners' light lilt, or the singers' sweet lay;
Thoughts of my neighbors my heart deep are stirring—
Lost forms and lost faces are with me to-day.



COLUMBKILLE CHURCH, GARTAN

GARTAN

The exile from Tyrconnel land,
  Takes with him over the sea,
Visions of beauty of ocean and strand,
  Of lough and river and lea;—
    But none moves his heart with a tenderer thrill
    Than a spot near Gartan glen and the hill
    Where was born the great Saint Columbkille.

Rugged and grand is the mountain view,
  Green the turf by valley and lake,
Where the wonderful boy in wisdom grew,
  Then left them for Christ's dear sake;
    He made of Iona a sanctified site,
    He planted the cross on lowland and height,
    And to Gael and Briton gave gospel light.

Centuries many, since, have gone,
  Yet his name it faileth not;—
It is honored in every clime and zone
  Where Christian truth is taught;
    And pilgrims from far are journeying still
    To that sacred spot near lake and hill—
    Where was born the great Saint Columbkille.

COCKLE STRAND, CARRIGART — ARDS WOODS IN THE DISTANCE

THE SAND EEL STRAND

The tide is low in Sheep Haven Bay,
And the harvest moon high stands,
As a joyful company hastens away
To cross to the sand eel strands.

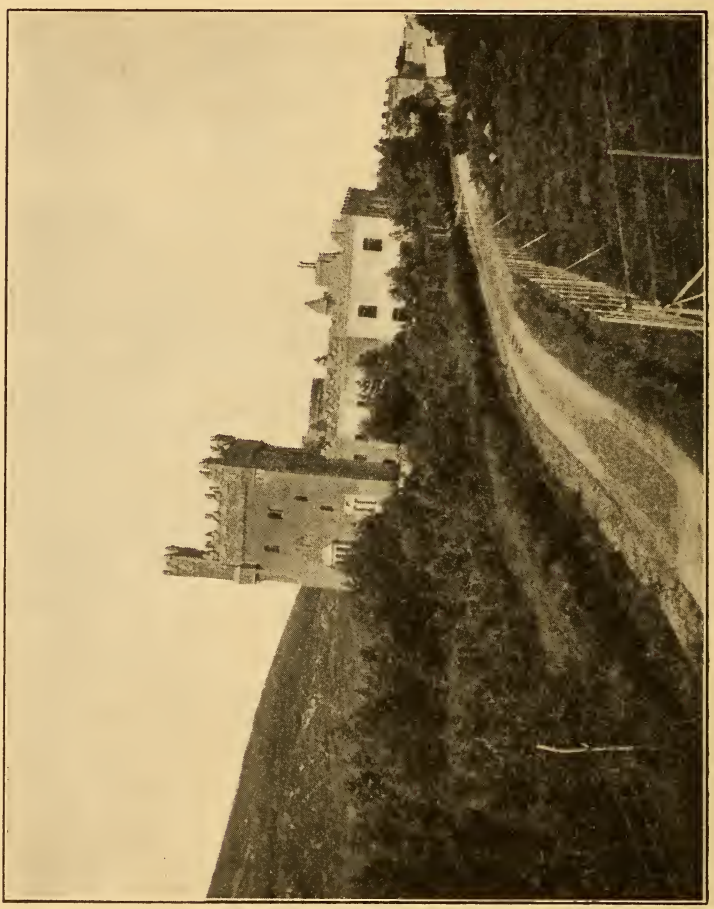
They pass o'er the gullet in curragh and yawl—
The tide is nearing its flow;
Into creel and basket the shining fish fall,
And the bar is roaring below!

The raven croaks on the garden wall;
There's a rush of the inflowing tide;
The boats are all gone, unheard is the call,
And the channel grows deep and wide.

Lustily back the oarsmen pull—
Hope shouts from the shadowy land.
Too late! for only the cry of the gull
Is heard o'er the sand eel strand.

Hopeless of aid from the distant shore,
They plunge in the waters deep;
The moan of the surf and the bar's deep roar
Are their dirge as they fall asleep.

When the sun next shines on meadow and corn,
And the weepers kneel down to pray—
Across the wrack the dead are borne
To the shore of Sheep Haven Bay.



GLENVEAGH CASTLE AND GROUNDS

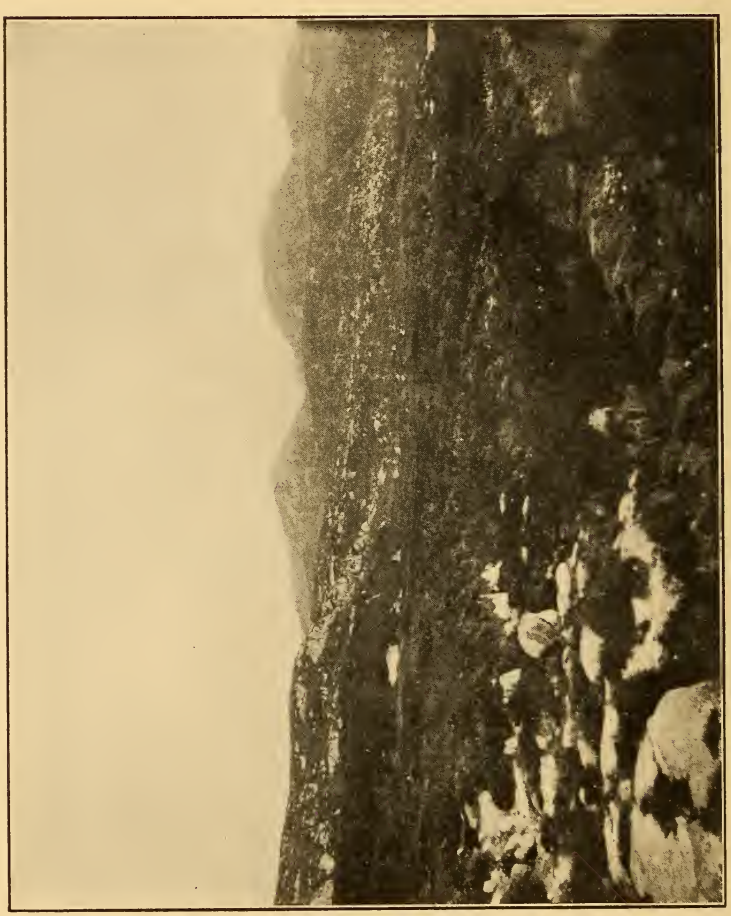
THOUGHTS ON HEARING OF THE DEATH OF THE LAST STEWART OF ARDS.

O, Cashelmore! O, Cashelmore!
Old home so far away!
To-night I hear the bar's deep roar
In weird Sheep Haven Bay!
Here, where Niagara's waters flow,
Near Erie's ice-fringed shore—
While ring the bells of Buffalo,
I think of Cashelmore.

Its early flowers I eager sought
And heather-purpled hill—
They're pictured ever in my thought—
Its birds are singing still!
Dear sharers of my boyish hopes,—
The living now are few—
Upon the breezy upland slopes
Joyous I walked with you.

I've watched the high tide ebb and flow
Past rampart banks of green;
The fields from Cloon to Castle Doe
And Rampart lands between.
Through woods of Ards when skies were bright
I've passed from strand to strand,
Found at each turn a new delight—
'Twas an enchanted land.

The peasant long since left his cot;
The tiller, forced to roam,
In many climes a future sought
Denied to him at home.



THE MOORS NEAR BARNES GAP

Gone, too, the great historic race,
Its work of beauty done;
Its fair demesne a lonely place,
O'er which the conies run.

And nature keeps a changeless face,
Whate'er the human lot;
Men come and go, they leave no trace,
And yet she heedeth not;
The western line still Muckish guards,
Seas break on grim Horn Head;
Silence and change have come to Ards,
And its last Stewart dead!

Buffalo, New York, U. S. A.
February 2, 1905.

From a painting by George Winter Roberts, Alden, N. Y.

WILD DONEGAL

A BOY'S FISHING

It was lonesome to be fishing out on the Benagormes,
And with no fish a-biting there to stay—
Watching the changing clouds take on such dreadful forms
On the ever-restless surface of the bay.

And see the fish a-flashing in the clear sea below—
Yellow, red and blue, but never a hook took they;
While a seal sat before him, a-coming with the flow—
Her looks so like a woman's, he wished she'd swim away.

The *Seeans* were not feeding, there were signs of coming storms,
The hunger-pain within him, and the evening growing gray,
And it being a wild and lonesome spot out by the Benagormes,
He thought it wise to hurry off, and fish some other day.

LITTLE NORA

Written for Mrs. G. B. M.

I would like to go to the bullberry brae,
Where the biggest bullberries be;
But I fear there is danger on the way,
And harm might come to me.

I'll take three drinks from the holy spring
And then I can wander free;
May dance and sing in the fairy ring
And around the wild rowan tree.

I will string with berries *cushags* ten,
And if *sheegies* I happen to see—
One I will give to the Little Men
And they will be good to me.

MUCKISH FROM THE SOUTH

THE CAOINE*

The fishing smacks at Downing's lay,
The sea and the air were still;
Sunshine and joy and the warmth of May
By the side of Granua's Hill.

The lark sang near the corn-field's edge,
The finch on the hawthorn's crest;
Wild flowers were blooming by the hedge,
And an Irish sky at rest.

Calm and peace o'er wood and lea,
Save a distant cuckoo's call;
O, years of bliss! it was good to be,
Such a morning in Donegal—

To feel the pulse of life beat high,
And breathe earth's fragrant breath;—
With love and youth and hope so nigh,
Afar were sorrow and death.

From the vale below, by mound and cross,
Arose a funeral wail—
The piercing cry of love and loss
From the stricken heart of the Gael.

Then all the sunshine and beauty fled,
And left were the anguish and thrill
That came with that wailing for the dead,
As it passed o'er Granua's Hill.

* The Keen, now rarely heard, is passing away.

Photo by William Lawrence, Dublin

HORN HEAD

TO HON. WILLIAM PRYOR LETCHWORTH, LL. D.

—The well-known Philanthropist and Author—On presenting him with a pot of heather, by M. J. and J. N. J., on April seventeenth, 1907.

Dim the year and far away,
When you rode that matchless day
In the summer weather—
Saw the shadows flit and play
Far o'er wide Sheep Haven Bay,
And sunshine on the heather.

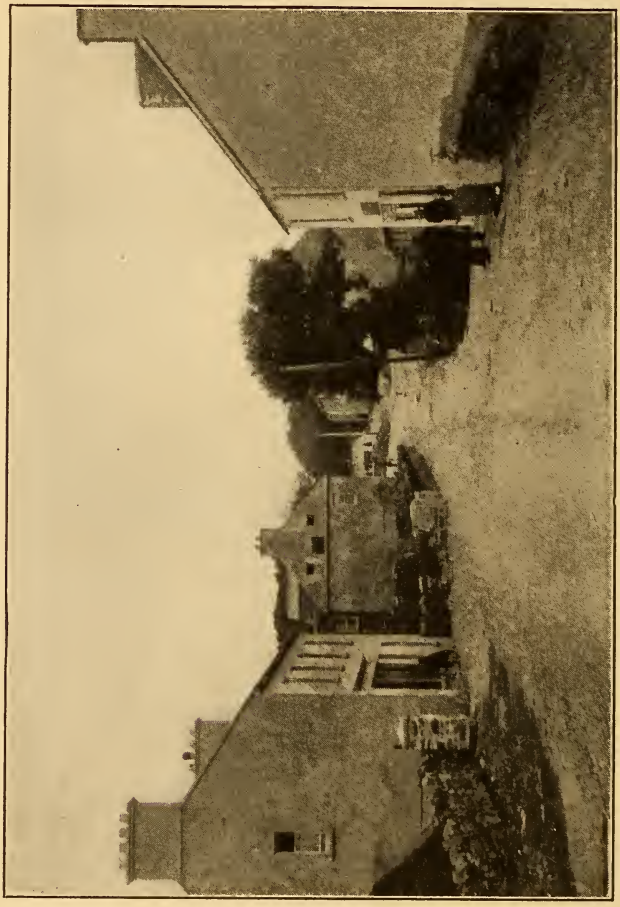
Your mercy-mission we recall,
And journey through lone Donegal,
Past Cashel—upper, nether;
A whispering air, a sense of awe,
A mystery in all you saw,
And fairies in the heather.

Three mountain summits to the west,
An ocean north of drear unrest;
Here fancy feels no tether—
It speeds beyond to realms unseen,
Passing o'er fields of emerald green,
And tracts of blooming heather.

The hazy hills, the moorland streams
Appeared as in a land of dreams;
And birds of varied feather;
Legends came back, old Celtic lays,
Myths, mighty deeds of bygone days,
And sunshine on the heather!

The fleeting seasons will not stay;
Life grows wearisome and gray;
Great hearts have worked together—
The glory of their speech and pen
Has brightened lives of suffering men
As sunshine lights the heather.

L OF C.



CREESLOUGH

THE BRIDGE OF CLOON

I

A boy in the splendor of June
Stood on the Bridge of Cloon;

He watched the trout in the pool,
The children passing to school;

The patient husbandmen go
With grist to the mill below;

Returning, by horse or with wheel,
Each bringing his burden of meal.

The river swept downward in glee,
To meet the incoming sea;

Beyond, rose the woods and green swards
And the opulent beauty of Ards;

The thrilling song of a thrush
Came from a neighboring bush;

Meadow and tree and flower
Rejoiced in that sun-lit hour;

Earth and heaven brought joy
To the sensitive heart of the boy,

As he stood, in that far-off June,
And dreamed on the Bridge of Cloon.

II

By the light of a winter moon
He stands on the Bridge of Cloon;

Years of absence and change
To him make all things strange;

BRIDGE OF CLOON

Can this be the river he knew,
The mill and the old-time view?

No more the great wheel groans,
No sound of the circling stones;

Mill roofless—all ruin and rust,
The faithful miller now dust

In the chapel yard with the dead,
And a faded cross at his head!

Patrons at rest—father and son,
Sowing, reaping, and grinding done,

And of all the numberless host
Not even a flitting ghost!

While out from the spectral sky
Comes a wild bird's desolate cry.

Dark shadows on mountain and lea
And the wail of a distant sea—

And under the pitiless moon
He, alone, on the Bridge of Cloon!

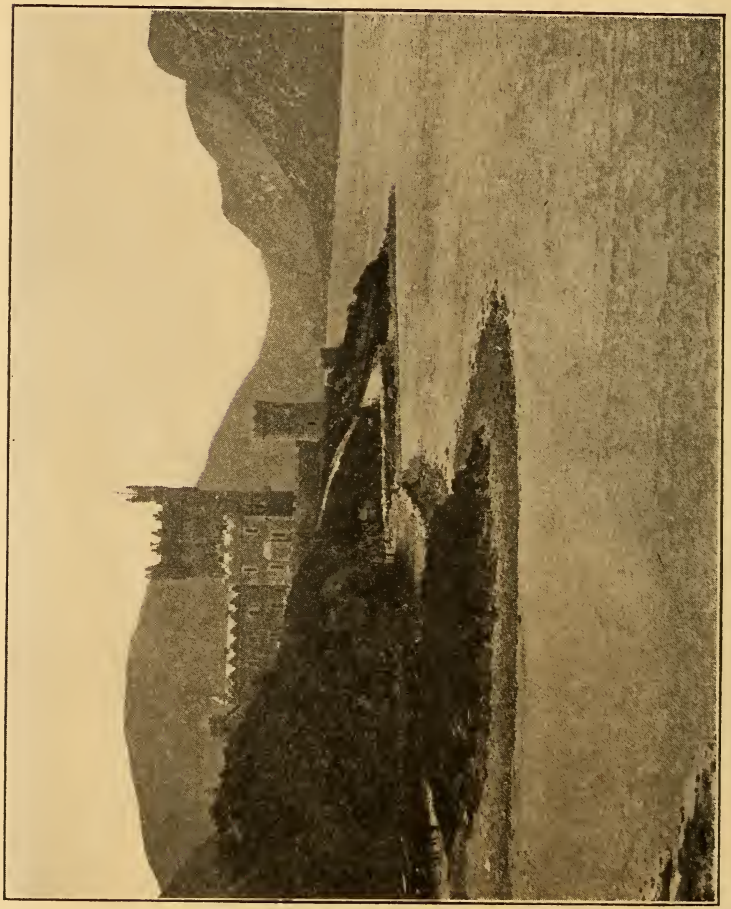


Photo by William Lawrence, Dublin

GLENVEAGH CASTLE, LAKE AND HILLS

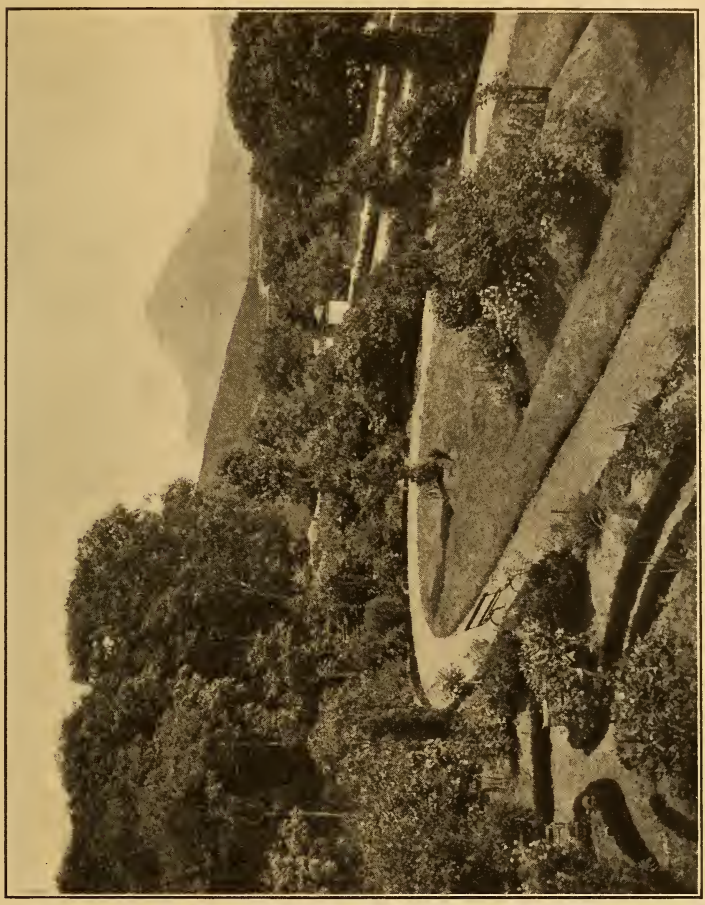


Photo by William Lawrence, Dublin

VIEW FROM GWEEDORE HOTEL

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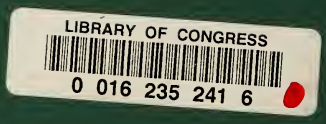
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